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Types of Jewish education in the United States and Canada: A study in religious adaptation

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TYPES OF JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA: A STUDY IN RELIGIOUS ADAPTATION

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by
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A.G.K.

It is a tree of life to them that grasp it, and of them that uphold it every one is rendered happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and its paths are paths of peace.

Proverbs 3:17,18

The duty of studying Torah rests upon every Jew. One who cannot learn himself must make it possible for others to learn.

Yoreh Deah 246:1

Where a teacher is not supported by the parents of his pupils, but by the community as a whole, all the members of the community must contribute towards his salary in proportion to their means.

Hoshen Mishpat 16:3

Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest may repair: the event is in the hands of God.

George Washington to the
Constitutional Convention
1787

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This thesis contains a description of the several types of Jewish schooling, formal and informal, which can be found today in many Jewish communities in the United States and Canada. Each chapter in this thesis is based on an interview with an outstanding educator who is closely identified with the type of schooling that is described. Each chapter tells something of the aims, the curriculum, the schedule, the method of operation and the history of the type of institution presented.

Three facts should be noted about the several types of schooling. They may differ from each other in form, content and operation, but they nevertheless have many elements in common so far as aims and curriculum are concerned. They include not only schools with formal programs but also camp and club activity with informal programs. They exist side by side in many communities and constitute part of a democratic community program for Jewish education.

The simultaneous existence of these several types of Jewish schools and educational activity is not an accident. They represent the variety of religious and

cultural adjustment of the last two generations of immigrant and native born Jews to the American environment. Together they constitute the religious school system of the American Jewish community. Their very variety is evidence of the democratic potentialities in Jewish community life. This variety emphasizes the fact that Jews living together can respect diversity of educational aim and practice, a fact supported by Jewish tradition and American democracy.

These facts impose a special responsibility upon the agencies of American Jewish community life. It is not enough to accept and to tolerate various types of Jewish schooling. The organized Jewish community owes it to itself as well as to the children and the parents served by these respective educational institutions to encourage them to maintain high standards of program and practice. It is the organized Jewish community which can help every child receive a high standard Jewish education in accordance with the ideological preferences of his parent. It is the total Jewish community, representative and democratically organized, that can undertake a cooperative program of Jewish education which would allow for diversity of ideological approach as well as for unity of action. Out of such respect for differences and from such cooperative activities will evolve higher standards of community

life, a better appreciation of spiritual values, a nobler expression of individual character, a greater service to American democracy and national welfare.

It is with the above factor in mind, namely that through diversity in its approach to Jewish Education unification can ultimately be forthcoming, that this story sought to analyze each type of Jewish Education. The purpose then of this study was to sift through the various types of Jewish Education and categorize them into meaningful wholes thereby indicating how each can be classified as a contributor to the meaningful whole that can be understood as Jewish Education.

CHAPTER II

THE DAILY AFTERNOON SCHOOLS

The Talmud Torah

Among the several types of Jewish religious schools in America, the Talmud Torah has earned a distinguished place. It is attended by the greatest number of children receiving an elementary religious education.

Meets After Public School Hours

"The name Talmud Torah usually refers to a Jewish religious school, meeting daily after public school hours, which is either affiliated with a congregation or conducted by an association of laymen who are devoted to traditional Judaism." (1, Page 246) This type of afternoon weekday school is considered an indigenous American Jewish educational institution, although historically, the Talmud Torah is the community school preserved by generations of Jews in other lands. Attempts at establishing such schools in America go back to the first half of the 19th century. They became, however, a permanent part of the American Jewish educational scene only at the end of the century.

Two developments in American history contributed to the growth of the Talmud Torahs. One was the increased

improvement and secularization of the elementary public schools. As the scholastic standards of the latter rose and as they also became less sectarian, Jews abandoned their own parochial schools, which prior to the Civil War were regular appendages of almost every synagogue at least in New York City. The other development was the large immigration to America in the eighties which brought with it a considerable contingent of East European Jews. The latter adopted the Talmud Torah as the educational medium best suited in their new economic and social environment for teaching their children the Jewish heritage they wanted to carry on on the new soil.

"The Talmud Torah proved more effective than any of the Jewish educational institutions found in America at the time of the mass Jewish immigration. It was more efficient than the itinerant, ignorant private 'melamdim' or the private 'hedarim' which dispensed Jewish learning to the children of the immigrants." (2, Page 131) It offered a more satisfactory Jewish education than was given in the Sunday schools, which were making their appearance at the time, and, last but not least, the Talmud Torah was less expensive and easier to organize than the all-day or parochial school, which also found a number of devotees among the new immigrants.

Communal Institutions

"From the very beginning, the Talmud Torahs were

semi-communal institutions." (3, Page 217) While Jewish life in those days was being organized along "landsmanschaften" and congregational lines, the founding of Talmud Torahs were early expressions of community effort. Its pupils and its leadership were drawn both from the neighborhood and from the wider community. The payment of tuition fees was in most cases voluntary, based on the ability and willingness of the parent to pay. In rare cases were pupils barred from the Talmud Torah for non-payment of tuition fees. As a consequence, the proportion of the Talmud Torah budget covered by tuition fees was relatively small. Its budget was in the main financed with funds raised through cooperative community efforts which ran the full gamut of money raising devices known to the early immigrant groups of America, such "as High Holy Day appeals in the synagogue, income from 'aliyoth,' membership dues, self-imposed taxes on 'matzoth' and 'schechitah,' bazaars, balls, individual donation, an occasional legacy, etc." (28, Page 31)

Schedule and Curriculum

Children entered the Talmud Torah at the age of seven and even younger, and usually attended it for six and more years. The Talmud Torah was open five days a week, Sunday through Thursday, for one and a half to two hours per session. Each pupil thus received on the

average from 7½ to 10 hours of instruction per week. In addition, the children came on Saturdays for Sabbath services, which were usually conducted by the children themselves.

"The Talmud Torah, next to the all-day school, offered its pupils in the past and still offers them today, a type of education whose aim is to perpetuate the Jewish classical heritage and preserve the traditional pietistic system of mores." (26, Page 14) A modern version of the old Talmud Torah curriculum has been worked out by the Talmud Torah Principals' Association of New York in cooperation with the Jewish Education Committee of that city. It is based on six years, and upon its completion the students are supposed to acquire the following skills and the knowledge of the following subjects, which are the requirements for admission to the Talmud Torah High School:

The Prayer Book. An ability to read fluently at sight the Sidur. A familiarity with the all-year round synagogue liturgy. An ability to translate the more important prayers, and an appreciation of the ethical and metaphysical values expressed in them.

The Bible. A knowledge of the narrative and legalistic portions of the Pentateuch, with some Rashi commentary. The Former Prophets. Selected portions of the Latter Prophets.

The Hebrew Language. The ability to understand, narrate and write simple stories in Hebrew.

Jewish History. From the days of Abraham till our own times.

Jewish Life. Customs and ceremonies, holiday celebrations, Jewish ethics and ideals. Participation in local Jewish community life through clubs and Keren Ami.

The Jewish World Community. Palestine Jewry. Israel in America. Jews in other lands.

Yiddish. The Yiddish language to be taught wherever the local conditions justify its introduction.

Bar Mitzvah. Preparation for the ceremony in the synagogue and the teaching of its religious significance.

Arts and Crafts. To the above subjects have recently been added clubs and courses in music, arts and crafts, dramatics, school assemblies.

American Democracy. In a number of Talmud Torahs the teachers, while teaching the various subjects try to interpret America, its holidays, its institutions and its democratic ideals to their pupils in terms of prophetic idealism and Scriptural history.

Method and Achievement

"The method of teaching in most Talmud Torahs is Ivrith B'Ivrith." (23, Page 1) This means that Hebrew is used as the language of instruction. In the latter

years, however, conditions have made it necessary to employ English as the language of instruction especially in beginners' classes.

The Talmud Torahs reached the height of their development in the second decade of the twentieth century, when in most cities the Talmud Torahs were the main, if not the only, Jewish educational institutions. They were in most cases well staffed, well administered and supervised, and enjoyed wide community support. "In New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, many Talmud Torahs were large educational institutions, each having 500 to 1000 and more pupils." (34, Page 4) The scholastic standards of many Talmud Torahs were relatively high, their graduates could boast of a satisfactory mastering of the Pentateuch in the original, of the year-round synagogue liturgy, of modern Hebrew and Jewish history.

Social Changes and Their Effects

Following the first World War two factors made themselves felt in American Jewish life, which greatly affected the development of the Talmud Torahs. One was the post-war economic boom which accelerated the break-up of the first immigrant area of Jewish settlement. The other was that the experience of living in an environment of religious pluralism. Social and political democracy and economic fluidity gave rise to a new

phenomenon in Jewish life--the rise of modern orthodox, conservative and semi-conservative congregations. These opened their own schools and offered attenuated programs based on two or three days a week instruction. Orthodoxy strictly interpreted was no longer binding on an increasing segment of the Jewish population. Obviously, the Talmud Torahs which were an expression of that uncompromising orthodoxy, began to lose ground. "The enrollment in Talmud Torahs declined, individual schools shrank much in size, proper grading of the classes became difficult and standards were lowered." (38, Page 8) The economic depression of the thirties aggravated matters still more. Most Talmud Torahs found themselves in financial straits, salaries of teachers were cut, buildings deteriorated, staffs broke up, and a general let-down in the institution of the Talmud Torah ensued.

Transition and Prospects

At present, this venerable institution seems to be affected by the process of transition which is taking place in the American Jewish community. Its future nevertheless seems to be assured. It still remains the intensive afternoon or after public school Jewish school. Sometimes "where the Jewish population is large, it is incorporated in individual congregational set-ups." (39, Page 5) Sometimes, where a community program of Jewish education exists, especially in the smaller

communities, several small congregational schools will unite and cooperate to establish a larger Talmud Torah with a more intensive program of studies and supported out of central community funds. This trend has been growing. During the past decade, Talmud Torahs have been receiving increasing support from such funds. In an increasing number of cities, congregational and non-congregational schools have merged and are conducted under joint auspices under the name of Associated Hebrew Schools or United Hebrew Schools, and are supervised and supported by a central community agency for Jewish education in which all groups of the Jewish population are represented. "The chief purpose of these schools is to raise the standards of Jewish education offered to the largest proportion of Jewish children in the community, who will continue to attend them after public school hours." (13, Page 12) To raise such standards will require increased number of hours of instruction, increased number of years of attendance, richer and more integrated programs of study, higher goals of achievement, highly qualified teachers, better buildings, improved text-books and methods, more qualified and more responsible supervision and whole-hearted cooperative community support, financially and educationally.

The Congregational School--Three Days A Week

Its Origin and History

The Jewish educational systems in the United States, must of necessity adjust themselves to the fact that the law required every American child to attend a public school or receive instruction equivalent to that given in the public school under conditions satisfactory to the educational authorities of the community.

One group of American Jewish educators decided to relegate Jewish religious instruction to Sunday mornings. Another group, whose influence has increased considerably in recent years, determined to build a system of Jewish day schools in which the child would get both his Jewish and general education under Jewish auspices and between the hours of 9 A.M. and 4 P.M. daily. The majority of those not satisfied with the patiently inadequate education offered by the Sunday School, and unable, because of theoretical and practical reasons, to accept the program of the all-day school, have sought to meet the needs of the Jewish education of their children by establishing schools which meet week-day afternoons and Sunday morning.

The most intensive curriculum of studies in this type of supplementary school required the pupil to attend five sessions per week--Sunday morning and four afternoons--for two hours each session. This intensive

afternoon schooling was usually associated with the communal Talmud Torah, although in many of these schools, the number of hours of weekly attendance has more recently also been reduced. In the congregational afternoon school affiliated most frequently with a conservative congregation, the number of sessions a pupil was required to attend per week was reduced to three, and the total number of hours of classroom work required during these three sessions ranged from three to six. "The pupils usually attend Sunday morning and two additional afternoons, Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday." (5, Page 18) A three day a week school which meets for less than a total number of six to four and a half hours per week is only very little superior to a Sunday School. Educational leaders of congregations who desire to make an honest effort to give their children a Jewish education which can in some measure be considered adequate must seek classroom attendance of six hours per week even though these hours be divided among three sessions.

Congregations have inclined to the three day a week school for various reasons. Parents and children insist on some free time in the afternoon so that their children may participate in the extra-curricular activities of the public school, or play out of doors, or attend to the children's personal needs such as doctor's appointments, purchasing trips to the stores, and for such outside

interests as dancing, music, or art. In addition, since many of the children live too far away from the Synagogue to enable them to come and go to school by themselves, the three day school reduces the transportation problem. "Congregational School Boards have preferred the three day a week school for the very poor but very practical reason of reducing the school budget." (6, Page 200) Pedagogues are divided on the subject of whether it is better, all things being taken into consideration, to have the child come five times a week for one hour per session, or three times a week for two hours per session. The trend, however, in the Congregational School which insists that children must come for more than one session per week, seems to be towards the three day school.

The Sunday Session of the Three Day a Week School

The factor which perhaps more than any other militates against the maximum effectiveness of the three day a week school is the widespread practice of reclassifying on Sunday morning the children who attend during the week. Since the three day a week school is usually associated with a congregation and since the congregation most often has a Sunday School connected with it, it is thought economical and pedagogically, even wise, to reclassify the week-day children on Sunday and put them with others of their own age level

for the study of such subjects as history, religion and current events. There is no falser economy or poorer pedagogy. In the first place, the one day of the week when the children come to school fresh after a night's rest is not utilized for that study which requires greatest mental concentration, namely Hebrew. "Moreover, by omitting Hebrew from the Sunday morning sessions, the span of forgetfulness between the Hebrew lesson given on Wednesday and the other given the following Monday, is thereby vastly increased." (3, Page 13) In addition, the Sunday morning contact of the children who attend during the week with the children of their own age who come only once a week tends in many instances to stimulate a resentment on the part of the week day pupils at being asked to give more time than the others. The feeling of superiority resulting from doing more than the others is hardly to be expected to compensate the average child for the extra time he gives to his Jewish schooling. Pedagogically, the week-day teacher is handicapped by the fact that he cannot vary his week-day instruction by introducing the easier subjects of history, current events or customs and holidays, with his session. This material which is usually more interesting to the child is all relegated to the Sunday session.

"The week-day classes should be kept intact on

Sunday morning." (21, Page 9) Teachers who teach two classes during the week should have the same two classes on Sunday. The unwritten law that all Sunday sessions must begin at the same time, namely at ten o'clock, is not sacrosanct. In one large three day a week school whose classes meet for two hours per session during the week, the Sunday schedule is somewhat as follows: "(1) 9:00 to 10:45 a.m. the Tuesday and Thursday classes meet. 10:45-11:30 they go to assembly. (2) 10:00-10:45 Monday and Wednesday classes are in the assembly. 10:45-12:30 they meet in their individual classrooms." (24, Page 25) The work of the three day a week school is helped immeasurably if there is no Sunday School department at its side competing with it. The least congregations interested in a minimum type of intensive education can do is either to eliminate the Sunday School completely or to limit attendance to children below specified ages. Thus in one such large school, the Sunday department accepts no boys above the age of eight or girls above the age of eleven.

The Objectives of the Three Day a Week School

"The number of days a school meets reflects to some extent the objectives of the school." (30, Page 7) But, there is more than one type of school meeting three times weekly. The objectives here to be briefly indicated as well as curriculum suggested, have in mind

primarily the Conservative Congregational School.

Conservative Judaism by and large wants its adherents to build their personal lives upon a faith in God and upon the teachings of the Torah as expounded in Rabbinic literature. It views a knowledge of the Hebrew language as indispensable to a thorough and genuine understanding of Judaism and for the continuation of a creative Jewish life. It seeks to integrate traditional Judaism as it has come down to us from the past with modern thought and with the ideals of Americanism. It considers the recreation of a free-flourishing Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael and the rebirth of Hebrew as a language of daily speech as well as of literary expression as of the utmost importance to the spiritual, cultural and social welfare of Jews everywhere, and to the unhampered development of Judaism as a religion and culture.

The curriculum of the Conservative Congregational school must, therefore, reflect these objectives in the subjects taught in the classroom as well as in the activities sponsored by the school outside the classroom.

What Work Can Be Covered In the Three Day a Week School

With an adequate staff and with efficient supervision, the following curriculum could be covered in a five-year course:

1. Hebrew (2¼ hours per week average for five years). "Appropriate pre-Humash texts for the first two years followed by one of the abridged versions of the Pentateuch, such as the Scharfstein or the Pollack series." (31, Page 33)

2. Prayer Book (1½ hours per week average for five years). A fairly good acquaintance with the order of the daily and Sabbath service plus the ability to read with sufficient ease to follow the traditional services. This, of course, presupposes the existence of an adequately functioning Junior Congregation meeting on Friday nights or Sabbath mornings or both.

3. History (forty minutes per week average for five years). An elementary course in Biblical history and an acquaintance with the post-biblical history centered around some of its outstanding personalities. In the post-Biblical era special attention should of course be given to the American Jewish scene and to modern Palestine.

4. Religion (½ hour per week average for five years). An acquaintance with the Jewish calendar, its festivals, their significance and their ritual, and with the other customs and ceremonies of Jewish life. The thoroughness with which these can be taught depends almost wholly upon the home and community environment of the children.

5. Current Events (½ hour per week average). Last two of the five years to be devoted to the reading of a children's current Jewish periodical, such as the World-Over or The Young Judean.

6. Songs (20 minutes per week average for five years). Songs connected with the synagogue events and some modern Palestinian songs.

High School

"The three day a week school can and should conduct a high school department for the graduates of its elementary grades, even though those graduates are few in number." (25, Page 23) Without making provisions for such continuity of study at least to the age of sixteen, most of whatever good is accomplished in the elementary level is soon lost.

A three to four year high school course of 5-6 hours per week can, when properly utilized, prepare children for attendance in the regular Hebrew courses of our presently existing Jewish Teacher Colleges. If the Confirmation age were set at sixteen, or at least on the Shavuoth nearest the pupil's sixteenth birthday, the possibility of keeping the children beyond the elementary level would be greatly enhanced.

For Children Who Attend Less Than Five Years

It is impossible to plan beforehand for children who come to the three day a week school, or to any other

kind of school, for a period of less than five years or for children whose mental abilities or spiritual attitudes prevent them from making maximum use of their opportunities in the classroom even though they may remain in attendance for the full five years. By and large, the curriculum for each one of these groups must be studied afresh every year or every term by the principal and the staff of the individual school. Above all, there is a woeful lack of proper attractive text material for this type of child, particularly for the study of Hebrew, the prayer book, and the Jewish religion.

Budgeting

"The budget of a three day a week school will depend upon its size." (29, Page 10) For a school with a small attendance, the per capita expense would naturally rise. For a school with a larger attendance, the per capita expense may decline somewhat. If we exclude all overhead charges and include only teachers' salaries, the per capita cost of a three day a week school should not go below $50. A less per capita cost may very well be a sign that a school is employing a staff of poor teachers or underpaying a staff of good teachers.

Estimate

This statement is not to be interpreted as a brief

advocating the three day a week school as the ideal solution for the problems of Jewish education in the United States. It does, however, seek to impress upon the reader that the three day a week school represents the very minimum which we can accept with the hope that if it is properly staffed and supervised its pupils can have a Jewish education that will make them self-respecting. Jews, understanding the intimate relationship between their Jewish and American heritage, and seeking to advance the highest interests of both.

The Yiddish Schools

The Early National-Radical Schools

The first Yiddish schools were organized by Jewish immigrants who came to America at the beginning of the century. Many of these immigrants were influenced by the socialistic doctrines current at the time in eastern Europe. In the United States, they combatted the spirit of cosmopolitanism and assimilationism which pervaded the Jewish radical group. The first Yiddish school was opened in New York City by the Poale Zion in 1910.

A year later, in 1911, the Jewish National Workers Alliance included the establishment and financing of national radical schools in its orbit of activities. New schools were organized in the large metropolitan

centers, such as Toronto, Montreal, Chicago and several others. An inner conflict developed, however, in the Alliance between the adherents of Yiddish and the followers of bilingualism for the school: Hebrew and Yiddish. This conflict was but the reflection of a deeper idealogical cleavage between those who believed in the possibility of continuing creative Jewish life in the diaspora and those who negated such a possibility.

The National-Radical Schools existed eight years from 1910 to 1918. They were secular, nationalistic, with strong reverence for tradition. They laid the foundation for the other types of Yiddish schools which later evolved in America.

The Jewish National Workers Alliance Schools (The Farband Schools)

The Jewish National Workers Alliance Schools were officially organized in 1918. The Farband Schools were slow to develop at first. Their position improved with the establishment of a Central Federation of Schools at the Rochester Convention (1924). The major characteristics of these schools is bilingualism. The study of Hebrew was first begun in the third school year, later it was introduced earlier in the curriculum and at present it is taught beginning with the second semester (there are, of course, deviations from the rule).

A recent brochure published by the Alliance formulates as follows the school's orientation:

1-Emphasis on the religio-ethical conception of the world.

2-The wholeness and continuity of Jewish life.

3-The historic importance of the millenia-old Jewish culture.

4-The hope of restoring the Jewish people to its ancient homeland, Eretz Yisrael.

5-Harmonization with American culture and democratic ideals.

6-Faith in and the striving for a just social order based on the prophetic ideals of justice. Respect for the toiler, love of work.

"The schools celebrate the Jewish holidays." (4, Page 50) The Oneg Shabbat ceremony has become an important institution in all the schools of the Alliance. They have been evolved a modernized version of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony. The extra curricular club activities of the schools are supervised by the Youth Movement of the Poale-Zion-Habonim. The children frequently engage in collecting money for the Jewish National Fund, the Histadruth and Palestinian children. Idealogically the schools have changed little since they were formed. The children have been studying at least one hour a day.

Of late, there has been a tendency toward increasing the school time to one and one-half hours and even to two hours daily.

In the high schools the studies of the elementary schools are continued on a higher level, with the following additions:

a-Hebrew literature

b-Excerpts from the Mishna, the Talmud, Ethics of the Fathers

c-Social problems, general and Jewish

"The Farband Schools have developed especially well in Canada. Montreal and Winnipeg have large all-day Yiddish schools." (35, Page 76) In the United States there were only afternoon Yiddish schools. A new all-day school has opened in New York City in 1955.

The Farband School holds the middle position between the rest of the Yiddish schools and the Talmud Torahs. They stress the educational and the cultural-nationalistic but not the pietistic element of the Jewish religion.

The Jewish Teachers Seminary, which trains teachers for the Farband schools, was established in 1918. The Seminary offers also general courses in Yiddish for the general public.

Sholom Aleichem Schools

"The Sholom Aleichem School has evolved out of the

National Radical School." (7, Page 15) The first Sholom Aleichem School was opened in New York in 1913, and since 1916 it is known under this name. After several such schools were in existence, the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute was organized in 1918. From their very inception, the Sholom Aleichem Schools tried to avoid all idealogical and party lines. They aimed to build their curricular program on the relevant needs of the child. This probably explains why the Sholom Aleichem Schools were the first to introduce singing, dancing, art crafts. They were also first to see the value of children's camps as important educational media. They have established a publishing firm (Matones) for children's literature and began publishing the Kinder Journal in 1920.

The orientation of the schools has undergone a considerable change. At first, the usefulness of the school was motivated by purely psychological considerations and by the secular interests of the parents. Much later one finds a conscious nationalistic orientation on the part of the Institute. In 1938, the schools introduced the study of the Bible and in 1945, the study of Hebrew from the third school year and on. The Sholom Aleichem Schools participate in the campaigns for Palestine Histadruth and Yough Aliyah. "The study of the ceremonial and traditional phases of Jewish life

have taken on more importance in their schools." (15, Page 56) Several schools have introduced the ceremony of Oneg Shabbat. They even made attempts at developing a modernized Bar Mitzvah ceremony, and they usually celebrate all the Jewish holidays. Even the very pious Jewish traditions which are at variance with modern life are explained to the children in a way that they may appreciate their historic significance and develop a sympathetic attitude for them.

The course of the elementary afternoon school is based on a schedule of five hours a week for a period of five years; more time is allotted for the higher grades.

The high school program includes the study of Yiddish and of Hebrew, the Bible in Yiddish, post-biblical literature and history of modern Jewish literature. The study of history is intensively pursued through the entire four years. The study of Jewish community life in the United States and in Palestine is added in the last two terms. Post-graduate high school courses were conducted by the Institute for a number of years.

All the Sholom Aleichem schools are directed by a Central Organization which is elected annually at the conference. Each school, however, raises its own budget.

The Workmen's Circle Schools

The emergence of the first Workmen's Circle Schools was preceded by a long idealogical strife. In 1906, the Workmen's Circle organized socialist Sunday Schools, which existed only a short time. There was no nationalistic motivation in the decision of the Workmen's Circle to establish Yiddish schools. Their organization was motivated by educational and social reasons. Nevertheless, due to the influence of the Yiddish National Radical schools, the program of the first Workmen's Circle schools contained a number of nationalistic and traditional elements. In the early 20's, most of the leaders and the teachers of the Workmen's Circle schools showed strong leftist tendencies. A sharp struggle, which developed within the Workmen's Circle between Communists and anti-Communist members, resulted in the secession of many groups in 1926.

There was an official change in 1927 in the idealogy motivating the Workmen's Circle schools. They were proclaimed as being Yiddishist, socialist, and free thinking. The nationalistic element of the school was formulated as follows: "Our schools aim to create the ties which will bind the Jewish child of America to the millions of Yiddish speaking Jews in other countries and nations." (15, Page 24) The nationalistic element in the official Workmen's Circle declaration became in

time more pronounced, and its rootedness in America more emphasized. The Workmen's Circle school has introduced of late the teaching of a number of traditional ceremonies. Many schools inside and outside of New York have incorporated the study of Hebrew. The study of the Pentateuch is not a separate subject matter in the elementary schools, yet the stories of the Bible, even the legal part of it, form part of the program.

The program of the elementary school outside of New York is based on five years attendance, but in most New York schools it is four years. Most New York schools are known as half schools, because they are open only three days a week, and on the fourth day, the children engage in extra-curricular activities, such as singing, etc.

The children of all the schools help collect money for Jewish European causes.

The study of the Yiddish language and literature form the major subjects of the Workmen's Circle High School. The other subjects in the curriculum are the study of Bible in Yiddish, history, modern Jewish problems, as well as the history and problems of the Jewish and general proletarian movements. The study of Hebrew was introduced several years ago. All other subjects are taught in Yiddish.

A Seminary for training teachers for the Workmen's

Circle Schools has been in existence for the last thirteen years. The Seminary also offers graduate courses for the graduates of the Workmen's Circle High Schools. The Workmen's Circle publishes a magazine, "Kultur un Derzieung," a richly illustrated "Kinder Zeitung," and conducts a publishing house, "Kinder-Ring," which publishes textbooks and reading material for the schools. The Workmen's Circle schools are supervised by the Workmen's Circle Educational Committee. School conferences are held every other year.

There has been a marked tendency to intensify the program by placing all schools on a five day a week basis. In these, as in the other Yiddish schools, the number of children who come from English-speaking homes has been increased.

The Curricula of the Yiddish Elementary Schools

"The major part of the time in all the Yiddish schools is devoted to teaching of the Yiddish language: speaking, reading, writing and composition." (12, Page 210)

The Hebrew language is taught in all Yiddish schools, but the time allotted to its study depends upon the parent organization with which it is affiliated.

In the Farband schools the children are taught Hebrew reading, speaking and elementary grammar.

In the Sholom Aleichem schools the teaching of

Hebrew begins in the fourth class.

The Workmen's Circle Schools introduced in 1946 the study of Hebrew in the curriculum of their elementary schools. It begins with the fourth class.

Bible: Excerpts from the Pentateuch, and other parts of the Bible are taught in the original in the Farband schools.

In the Sholom Aleichem schools, the teaching of the Pentateuch in Yiddish starts in the third year and of the First Prophets in the fifth year.

In the Workmen's Circle Schools, Bible stories and some excerpts from the Torah are taught in Yiddish.

Yiddish Literature: Stories and poems from the Yiddish classic writers as well as from a number of younger important authors are taught in all Yiddish schools.

Jewish History: A complete course of Jewish history up to the present time is taught in the Farband and Sholom Aleichem schools and in some of the Workmen's Circle Schools. In the Workmen's Circle half-schools (where they teach only three times a week) Jewish history is taught up to the period of Judah Hanasi.

Jewish Life and Problems: Jewish folklore, customs and ceremonies, contemporary Jewish problems are taken up in all schools. In the Farband schools the emphasis is upon Labor Zionism and Palestine. In the Workmen's

Circle Schools the discussions on current events includes contemporary problems of the labor movement in the United States and elsewhere.

Jewish Life in America: Interpretation of American ideals, the Jewish contribution to American culture and civilization, Jewish institutions and organizations in America are emphasized in all schools.

Singing: Yiddish modern and folk songs are taught in all schools. The Farband schools and some of the Sholom Aleichem schools include also Hebrew songs.

The Yiddish School-A Yiddish Center

The Yiddish school, irrespective of its orientation, forms the hub of intimate associations for the parents. It is, thus in way, a Jewish center for the Yiddish speaking progressive element.

CHAPTER III

THE ALL-DAY SCHOOL

The Jewish Day School

The Jewish Day School is variously known as the Jewish Parochial School, the Yeshivah School and the All-Day School. Of these several designations, the last with the word "all" omitted is perhaps the most satisfactory one. The term parochial is associated with the word parish and is, of course, not a Jewish term. The name Yeshivah School is tautological and hence not acceptable. It would seem, therefore, that the name best suited is the Jewish Day School.

The Jewish Day School generally defined, is an educational institution in which a combined program of Jewish and general studies is offered. Most Jewish Day Schools are elementary in character although some of them have already been extended to the level of secondary education.

There are four types of educational institutions that are included in the category of Jewish Day Schools. These are the Traditional Yeshivah, the Modern Yeshivah, the Integrated Yeshivah and the Hebrew-English Integrated School. At the present time (1946) there are about

seventy such schools throughout the country with forty of them in New York City. About ten thousand pupils constitute the child population of these schools and their total budgets amount to approximately a million and one-half dollars.

History

The Emancipation which began at the end of the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth century gave to the Jews of Europe not only civil rights, but also the opportunity to avail themselves of the educational facilities that were opened to all citizens. Up to that period secular education, whether of the elementary, secondary or collegiate character, was relatively closed to Jews. In the eagerness of the Jew to take advantage of these new educational opportunities, it was feared that he would overlook or neglect the traditional Jewish schooling of his children. Some way, therefore, had to be found whereby secular or general education could be imparted to Jewish children without surrendering or sacrificing traditional Jewish learning.

The school in Frankfort established by Samson Raphael Hirsch offered under one roof and under Jewish auspices the secular education of the general schools together with the Jewish studies that represented the religious culture of Israel. Schools of that type

appeared in other parts of Germany and ultimately in Eastern Europe as well. In America they made their appearance in a permanent form about a half century ago. Their founders were mainly the immigrants of Eastern Europe who began to come to America in large numbers at the close of the nineteenth century.

"Compulsory elementary education is part of American democracy and is one of the glorious features of the American way of life." (10, Page 15) In many states children are expected to receive formal education up to the age of sixteen. Here, therefore, there was real need and room for an educational institution of the Yeshivah type.

Of course afternoon Jewish schools were and are in existence, but these are not always adequate because of the insufficient time available and because their instruction is given to a child who is tired after a day of schooling in the public schools. In addition, there are a variety of circumstances, social, cultural and even geographic, that impair the effectiveness of the afternoon school.

Traditional Yeshivah

"The earliest form of the Jewish Day School that made its appearance in this country is the Traditional Yeshivah." (18, Page 200) It has a school day ranging from eight to ten hours. In the earlier days of that

institution's existence, the school day began at eight-thirty in the morning and did not end until seven in the evening. By gradual stages and under the pressure of educational authorities as well as the requests of the parents, the school day was somewhat shortened. With some variation, the school day is divided as follows: Hebrew studies from nine in the morning until one in the afternoon--English studies from two in the afternoon to six in the evening.

The English studies offered in the Traditional Yeshivah meet the requirements of the educational authorities of the city or state in which the school is located. The teaching staff is generally recruited from among the teaching personnel of the public schools. English teachers who are unaffiliated with the public schools must be licensed to teach the general subjects.

The Hebrew course of study is a very substantial one. In most of these schools the children cover the Pentateuch at least twice with a good deal of the Rashi commentary and with some additional commentaries included. Substantial portions of the major and minor prophets are also studied, and the Hebrew language and literature receive a good deal of attention. A few of the more extreme schools of this type do not devote too much time to the Hebrew language and to the literature in that language. In these schools the language of

instruction is Yiddish. There are schools where parallel classes are conducted, in some of which the language of instruction is Yiddish and in others Hebrew.

The subject in which the Traditional Yeshivah excels and to which it gives most emphasis, is Talmud. It is not uncommon for a child in the fourth or fifth grade to begin Talmudic studies and thus spend four or five years at these studies. The brighter students are able upon graduation to read comprehensibly substantial sections of the important tractates of the Talmud.

Some of the Traditional Yeshivoth have already established high school departments called Mesivtoth. In these Mesivtoth the Hebrew curriculum is extended and intensified, and even more time is devoted to Talmud studies. The general or secular studies conform to those offered in the public high schools.

Modern Yeshivah

The second type of Jewish Day School is the Modern Yeshivah. This type differs from the Traditional Yeshivah in several respects.

To begin with, the language of instruction in these schools is invariably Hebrew. The language arts are cultivated and stressed. Hebrew literature, ancient, medieval and modern is read and studied, and the student is taught to appreciate the aesthetic and artistic character of our culture.

The school day in the Modern Yeshivah is generally not as long as in the Traditional Yeshivah. As a rule, the Jewish studies do not go beyond twelve o'clock, and the afternoon is devoted entirely to general studies. The school day ends at about four or five o'clock at the latest.

The general atmosphere in the Modern Yeshivah reflects its character. The teaching personnel, the school structure, the administration, the utilization of music, dramatics and arts and crafts in the educative process are some of the features that characterize this type of school and that justify its designation as a Modern Yeshivah.

Integrated Yeshivah

"The Integrated Yeshivah is a relatively recent form of the Jewish Day School." (33, Page 15) The oldest school of that type, the Ramaz School, is not yet ten years old. As a matter of fact, an adequate name to describe this type of school has not yet been devised. The term Integrated Yeshivah does not properly describe it. Interchangeably, however, the designation, Ramaz Type of School, will also be used.

The Integrated Yeshivah differs in scope and philosophy from the Traditional Yeshivah although it offers in substance a curriculum of Hebrew studies that is similar to the one offered in the Traditional Yeshivah.

"The objective of the Integrated Yeshivah is to integrate American and Hebraic cultures, or to achieve a blending of Judaism and Americanism." (33, Page 200)

This objective is attained in various ways. To begin with, the school day is not divided into a morning and afternoon session, with religious studies offered in the morning and the general studies in the afternoon. Both curricula are offered departmentally throughout the school day. The child may begin the school day with the study of the Bible during the first period, proceed to arithmetic in the second period, then to the Hebrew language, arts, then to general geography, and so on throughout the day. The impression is thus made upon the child that he is a Jew and an American throughout his educational career, and therefore, throughout his life.

The philosophy of integration is not merely expressed, however, in the arrangements of the school day. It is incorporated into the subject matter of instruction as well. In the expressional arts, general and Jewish arts are combined and are taught as one. Jewish history will encompass the history of the many peoples with whom the Jews came into contact. General geography will include the geography of Palestine. The important events studied in the Bible, such as the Exodus from Egypt and the Revelation at Sinai, are

associated with the emancipation of other peoples, and especially with the independence won by America, as well as with the doctrines of liberty and democracy that are universal in character and biblical in origin. In the domestic science laboratory nutrition and homemaking are taught along with the laws of Kashruth and Dietary observances. In the school assembly the national holidays of America are endowed with religious significance, and the occasions of Jewish festivity are portrayed against a background of American life. Even in such activities as charity giving and social service, integration is employed. A school welfare fund is maintained, and the children are taught to contribute to the March of Dimes and the Jewish National Fund, to the Red Cross and to the United Jewish Appeal, to the purchase of War Bonds and to the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies.

Thus the child grows up normally as an integrated personality. Thus is he made to realize that Judaism commands him to be a good American, and America expects him to be a loyal Jew.

The philosophy of integration is conveyed to the student by a teaching personality in which there is incorporated the products of such integration. The Hebrew teacher is expected to be a college graduate and to possess in addition to Jewish knowledge, the

general culture of an academically trained person. The teacher of the general subjects is one who is aware of and sympathetic to the doctrines, observances and traditions of Israel. The teacher of the general subjects is capable of conducting the Hanukkah performance, and the teacher of religious studies is assigned to direct the Thanksgiving pageant. The former may be in charge of leading in the Benediction and Grace at luncheon time, the latter, of the gymnasium and field activities.

The Integrated Yeshivah School finally, seeks to overcome any tendency towards isolationism or parochialism. It does not want to insulate the child against the environment, but on the contrary, avails itself of every opportunity to bring the Jewish child into contact with other American children.

The Integrated Yeshivah School, therefore, has a school week of only five days with no instruction on Saturday or Sunday. There is a winter vacation that coincides with the vacation period enjoyed by all American children in the public schools. (The athletic program of the Ramaz Type of School is arranged so as to have the various teams meet in competitive games with the children of the private schools of the general community.) This type of school, therefore, far from being segregational in character, becomes an aspect of American cultural democracy.

In religious spirit, the Integrated Yeshivah is Traditional. In method it is modern and progressive. Its end result is a child who is capable at the conclusion of his elementary studies to pursue higher Jewish education or higher general studies in any school of his choice.

The Hebrew-English School

The Hebrew-English Integrated School, sometimes also referred to as the Academy School, is in its philosophy, objectives and methods similar to the Integrated Yeshivah. In the substance of its Hebrew studies, however, its standards and demands are decidedly lower. Only approximately one hour a day or five hours a week are devoted to Hebrew studies. On the other hand, the general studies can compare most favorably with those offered by the better private schools of the community.

The Hebrew-English Integrated School may be said to have three objectives. First, it seeks to provide private school instruction of a high caliber for Jewish children. Second, it strives to provide a wholesome Jewish atmosphere and an opportunity for numerous and continuous Jewish experiences for the Jewish child. Third, it desires to offer a modern and progressive Jewish education that would not overtax the child, that would satisfy a special class of parents and that would eliminate the necessity of an afternoon religious school

or Talmud Torah.

"There are two such schools in existence in New York City, one in the borough of Brooklyn, and the other in Far Rockaway, Long Island." (33, Page 3) Both these schools are in existence for more than a decade and have, in the opinion of general as well as well as Jewish educators, proved their merit and worthwhileness.

The Jewish Day School is growing fast in number and in enrollment. Two predictions, however, are not without justification. The Jewish Day School will contribute greatly to the enrichment and advancement of Jewish learning in this country. The Jewish Day School is destined to become a major contribution of American Israel to American cultural democracy.

The Foundation School

"The Foundation school is a type of school which can be used by any Jewish educational group, whether it consider itself orthodox, conservative, reform, Yiddish or purely social." (27, Page 15) Its purpose is to develop through bicultural experience a balanced physical, emotional and intellectual basis in early childhood for subsequent learning and living as an American and as a Jew. In this discussion early childhood includes the age groups, two through eight, and

the Foundation school includes the nursery, the kindergarten and the primary grades. The Foundation school may keep its pupils from four to six years depending on the age they are admitted.

Beth Hayeled--An Experimental School

An experimental school of this kind has been conducted for a number of years in New York City. It is known as the Beth Hayeled, or the House of the Child, because its educational policy stresses the natural growth of the child, his happiness and balanced personality development. This growth is achieved through an ever widening sphere of activity and experience. Much of it is social and cultural in character. The normal environment of the child's home, school and street provides most of the content of this activity or experience. This content includes both American and Jewish elements, naturally and harmoniously integrated on the child's age level.

So far as the specifically American elements of the child's experience in the Foundation school is concerned, it may suffice to mention here the results achieved in the case of those children who "graduated" at age eight from this school. Whether these "graduates" continued their schooling at a public, private or parochial school, they were all admitted into the third grade. The majority entered the public school where

most of them were admitted to advanced standing. It is interesting to note that not only did these pupils do well in their school studies, but also adjusted socially so as to become class officers and leading participants in school plays. The discussion here will dwell on the specifically Jewish elements rather than the specifically American elements of this school's program.

Jewish Content

What are the specific elements of Jewish content (Jewish experiences) which a child in a Foundation school acquired? The answer to this question depends largely on the standards and the character of the particular school which the child attends, on his length of stay there, on his own physical and mental powers, on the influence of his home environment and on his parents' cooperation with the school. The experimental work in the Beth Hayeled will serve here as a point of reference. We must also remember that its pedagogic methods are those of American progressive schools.

The Beth Hayeled admits its pupils at age three and discharges them at age eight. They attend five days a week, from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon, from the middle of September through the first week in June. When they have finished their course, the "graduates" of this school have had five years of joyous experience with the celebration of the Sabbath

and the Jewish festivals (in addition to American festivals). In association with these festivals they will have learned many stories of Palestine and Biblical heroes. They will have learned to speak some Hebrew, and to recite some prayers. The words "joyous experience," more than any other, help to describe the purpose and the quality of the specific cultural elements selected by the Beth Hayeled for inclusion into the Jewish content of the child's life at school. Although physical, emotional and intellectual growth occur organically and simultaneously in early childhood, physical and emotional growth and adjustment to nature, to things, to people take precedence over intellectual achievement. The difficulty from which a child frequently suffers in school or at home is that an over solicitous parent or teacher will stress intellectual attainment to the neglect of the physical and emotional aspects of child's growth. In a Foundation school there is freedom from the rigid requirements of book learning. Hence, in the Beth Hayeled the stress from the very beginning has been to identify things Jewish with joyous living and experience. The major result from this approach has been the development of cordial, positive and creative attitudes toward things Jewish or Hebrew. Evidence of this attitude became apparent through the return of the "graduates" of the Beth Hayeled to continue

their Jewish studies after public school hours, through their continued enrollment at the afternoon school with practically no drops, through their unusual rate of progress in their Hebrew studies, through their self-respecting Jewish behavior at public school, and through their contribution of Hebraic cultural elements to the social and inter-cultural activities of the public or private schools they attended.

Examining the "Jewish learning" of these "graduates" in terms of more specific content detail, we find that at the end of five years these children could understand the spoken Hebrew of their teachers in ordinary classroom or daily living routine. They could respond in conversation haltingly and, within the limits of their vocabulary, compose little stories or poems. A few of them even qualified for admission to Camp Massad, a Hebrew speaking camp. The most important aspect of their linguistic achievement, however, was their ability to go to the shelf of Hebrew books and to select one of their own choice for personal reading. It was gratifying to note that in their last year (age seven to eight) many of them could read books of the second grade in the average Talmud Torah without much assistance. This achievement in Hebrew became more noteworthy when these "graduates" returned for their second year of "post-graduate" study at the Talmud Torah. All the subjects

of study in this class were carried on in the Hebrew language. They read the Bible text in the original naturally and enthusiastically, and they were most ready to do "research" work at home in connection with Bible and History assignments. They proved a source of joy to their teacher and parents.

Yet it is not by their knowledge of Hebrew alone that the "Jewish learning" of these children should be measured. It is their enjoyment of Jewish life, their "Jewish" behavior, that might serve as a criterion for observation or judgment. For five years, every Friday of the school year, these children individually and as a group, shared in the joyous experience of preparing, welcoming and celebrating the Sabbath. Every year, corresponding to the children's growth in age, the celebrations grew progressively in content, in song, in blessings, in ceremonial, in Hebrew used, in dishes served, in aesthetic dress and dressings, in self-management, in the welcome to parents and Sabbath guests.

Five years in succession, as the children matured, they learned more and more each year of how and why Jewish festivals were celebrated, and there was at least one Jewish festival a month. It sometimes took two or three weeks to prepare for the celebration of each festival. And preparation in this case meant group

activity and planning by each and all of the children. It was learning by doing and living cooperatively. These rounds of festivals included the High Holy days, Succoth, Thanksgiving, Hannukah, Tu B'Shvat, Purim, Pesach, Lag B'Omer, Shabuoth.

Experience and Learning

To detail all the "learning" the children acquired in the process of preparing and celebrating of these holidays would not only take much space but would prove almost impossible. With each festival there were associated new joys, new deeds, new vocabulary. Every year these grew in quantity, scope, and purpose. As previously suggested there were additional songs and dances, additional blessings and Hebrew words, additional planning, trips and things to make, additional home participation, additional guests to invite to the class celebration. Every festival had its own characteristic, its own story, its own Biblical relationship, its own Palestinian relationship, its own American or world relationship. Parts of the preparations and celebrations carried over into the home and synagogue. Because this particular school was associated with a synagogue, the children made frequent visits to it in connection with festival celebrations, and became intimately familiar with much of its structure and content, including the Ark and the scroll of the Law. To them

the process of learning may not have been a conscious one. They did not come to school to learn about their Jewishness. They came to experience their Jewishness, and they found it good, healthy, helpful, cheerful, creative activity. Their Jewishness was made an additional source of happiness for them. The teachers worked hard, the parents helped too, and both derived satisfaction from their efforts.

Cooperation of Parents

The part which parents play in a Foundation school is perhaps one of its unique qualities. Early childhood is a period when parents are most closely tied to the physical and emotional growth of their children. The life of the child in the home and that in the school during this period must be harmoniously related. Parent and teacher must work cooperatively in their respective spheres towards a common goal. Both must know the physical, emotional, social and mental facts about the child's abilities and welfare, and a cooperative purpose in the development of his personality. That is why in the Beth Hayeled a doctor makes daily examinations of the child's health, and advises both parent and teacher concerning special care when necessary. That is why in the Beth Hayeled teachers visit the homes of children before and after they are admitted. That is why parents visit this school regularly and

confer with teachers twice a month in group meetings. They seek to keep abreast of the child's program of activities or "studies" so as to share with their children and the school the new and expanding Jewish experiences (or other experiences) of each week or month.

Teacher and parent realize that if activities and attitudes at home are in conflict with those in the school, the emotional life of the child will suffer. Hence, the understanding with the parents that the Jewish program of the school is a mutual desire, and that the home's attitudes or activities will support and not negate the school's Jewish program. A joyous Jewish experience is one in which parent and teacher as well as child share. Hence, many of the parents in the Beth Hayeled have voluntarily asked for classes in Hebrew and Jewish practices so as to keep up with their children's Jewish experiences in school.

Foundation for Subsequent Jewish Living and Learning

"Whatever values a Foundation school may have for the individual child and his Jewishness, the program of its activities and experiences can serve as a foundation upon which subsequent Jewish schooling may be planned." (37, Page 21) The Temple Anshe Chesed in New York City where the Beth Hayeled has been housed has taken advantage of its opportunity and has arranged

special continuation classes for the "graduates" of the Beth Hayeled as part of its Talmud Torah activities. These children come three times a week, twice during week days and once on Sundays. All work is done in Hebrew. The general pedagogic methods practiced in the Beth Hayeled are carried forward into these classes. The pupils attend regularly; the program of studies has been intensified; the library has become an important adjunct of the classroom; the rate of progress of the pupils is outstanding; the teacher has herself become more creative and progressive; the parents continue to take an interest in the school's activities and in their children's progress.

Need for Time and Environment

So long as Jewish schooling will suffer from lack of time and environmental stimulation or encouragement, it cannot hope to make Judaism an influence in the lives of Jewish children. The Foundation school offers an opportunity to bring children and their parents under the beneficial influences of Judaism during early childhood years. It holds these children long enough to develop proper attitudes in them toward their Jewishness. It affords a foundation of Jewish knowledge and feelings upon which future schooling can be planned. Utilizing this foundation, the afternoon Hebrew school can so arrange its schedule as to make continued Jewish

study a further pleasant Jewish experience for the child, and an attractive experience for the parent to share. Talmud Torah, or afternoon Hebrew schools, may look forward to the time when they can rid themselves of their present inescapable necessity to spend most of their classroom time in the drilling of mechanical reading in preparation for future adult participation at synagogue services. Instead they may be able to devote most of their limited time to the study of the attractive content of Jewish literary and historical sources, and to planning further joyous Jewish group experiences for their pupils.

Need for Teachers

There is perhaps one major difficulty that may impede the growth and spread of Foundation schools. That is the lack of properly trained teachers, who have the necessary pedagogic, American and Hebrew cultural or religious qualifications. This difficulty may be overcome in time if our Jewish teacher training schools will assume their respective measures of responsibility, and if Jewish communities will make such positions both socially and economically attractive.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUNDAY MORNING SCHOOL

The Jewish Sunday School

Strictly speaking, it would be more correct to entitle this chapter "The Jewish Religious School" and then to proceed to describe it. Since, however, the chapter will deal, to a large extent, with the one day a week school, and something is probably gained by making the title specific, the words "Sunday School" will have to stand.

Brief History

"All Jewish schools in the United States were, at first, all-day schools which gave both secular and religious instruction." (40, Page 35) Prior to 1860, the American public school had not struck firm roots, but in the second half of the nineteenth century it became well established and Jews naturally began to send their children to it. Little by little the all-day schools which had combined secular and religious instruction were replaced by two day a week schools, generally conducted on the Sabbath and on Sunday. In 1838, Rebecca Gratz established in Philadelphia the first Jewish Sunday School in the United States.

Though Sunday Schools increased in number after that day, it is interesting to note that in 1882, eighty-one out of a total of ninety-one schools affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations were still two day a week schools, conducted on the Sabbath and on Sunday. In 1873, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was organized, and in that very year it was decided to unite the religious schools in order to improve their educational status. In 1886, the Hebrew Sabbath School Union was organized in Cincinnati, "to provide a uniform system for all Hebrew Sabbath schools in the United States, by promulgating a uniform course of instruction and by training competent teachers." (11, Page 27)

The Society continued its work, published several textbooks for pupils and guide books for teachers, and in 1903, gave up its separate existence and handed over its activities to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. From that day on the Union engaged in propaganda for Jewish religious education in small communities, organized Sunday Schools, and published a few textbooks. In 1911, the Organization named a special committee of rabbis to help it on its literary work. This committee, known as the Commission on Jewish Religious Educational Literature, continued until 1923.

A new period, as far as Sunday School education is

concerned, began in 1923 when Dr. Emmanuel Gamoran was invited to Cincinnati to take charge for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, of a new department--an education department--to be established.

A Commission on Jewish Education was created as a joint body representing both the Central Conference of American Rabbis (the professional group) and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (the laity). It was likewise decided to arrange a course of study for the Jewish schools and to engage in propaganda for week-day religious instruction, that is for the introduction of at least one session in addition to Sunday. The fundamental aim of the Jewish Religious School was formulated as that of enabling the child to participate intelligently, effectively and loyally in Jewish life.

Steps to Improve the Reform Sunday School

A "Survey of 125 Religious Schools" at that time revealed some interesting facts. "Few of the schools provided education more than one day a week." (16, Page 13) The average period of instruction in the schools was an hour and twenty-seven minutes per week. The greatest lack was found in the field of curricula and textbooks. There were few elementary school books and none for the high schools. There was only one complete series of textbooks in Jewish history and that was altogether too difficult for juvenile comprehension.

Current events were not taught at all. The center of gravity was on the teaching of Bible stories with a lot of "drawings of morals" from the stories. Jewish history was brought up to the Babylonian exile, and there the children remained, never to be "redeemed". Most of the teachers were unprepared for their work.

It was obvious that certain basic steps had to be taken, especially along the lines of curriculum making, textbook planning and publication, and teacher training.

Concentration on these primary tasks constituted a program of activities for two decades. This work resulted in the development of an ever-changing curriculum for the Jewish Religious School. We say "ever-changing" because, as new materials are developed, as new needs are discovered, and new books are prepared the course of study is correspondingly changed to include these new materials. The present course of study of the Sunday School assumes that, as far as possible, these subjects of instruction which lend themselves to concrete presentation by the teacher and to activity on the part of the children will be introduced into the lower grades in the school; those which tend to be abstract will be relegated to the higher grades of the Jewish Religious School. For this reason, the center of gravity in the kindergarten and in the first three grades is on the holidays, on the customs and ceremonies connected with

them, and on the activities centering around these. Textbooks have been prepared for these areas. Likewise the subject of Biblical and post-Biblical heroes is introduced in these early grades. As examples we may take the books on Bible Tales by Lenore Cohen, "Hillel's Happy Holidays" by Mamie G. Gamoran, and "The Great March" by Rose G. Lurie.

In the intermediate and higher grades, courses in Jewish history and in literature have been introduced. Examples of these are the history series by Jacob S. Golub and by Mordecai I. Soloff, "A History of the Jews in the United States" by Lee J. Levinger, and the series on "Jewish Literature Since the Bible" by Feuer and Eisenberg.

Two new series of Hebrew books (Gilenu--The Play Way to Hebrew and Torah-Li) by Emmanuel Gamoran and Abraham H. Friedland have been introduced for the teaching of Hebrew, the prayers, and selections from the Bible.

Such subjects of instruction as Jewish Current Events and singing were made a regular part of the curriculum. Modern Jewish problems and movements, Jewish fiction, the Jewish contribution to Civilization, and other similar subjects are some of the newcomers in the curriculum.

Teacher Training

Similarly beginnings have been made for the development of a teacher training literature. Just as in the regular curriculum, books have been published on Bible, Jewish history, customs and ceremonies, Jewish literature, Hebrew, Jewish folklore, present problems, so in the field of teacher training we have developed syllabi and books for the guidance of teachers both in the content subjects of the curriculum as well as in methodology. An interesting and unique experiment in this connection is the work done in the field of correspondence instruction. Five courses have been developed thus far for the training of teachers whose communities are removed from the large Jewish centers where teacher training facilities exist. The courses prepared thus far are:

A Bird's-Eye View of Jewish History
The Jewish Festivals
The Bible and Jewish Life Today
A History of the Jews in the United States
Leading a Jewish Life in the Modern World

Week-day Sessions

"As a result of the propaganda which has been carried on during these years on behalf of week-day instruction, it may be estimated that over 25 per cent of the Jewish religious schools connected with Reform congregations have introduced week-day sessions, usually for the higher classes in their schools." (14, Page 27)

The curricula, the textbooks, and the new materials developed have also led to improvements in methods of teaching.

Considerable experimentation is going on in the better schools. In the last four years (since 1941) the Union of American Hebrew Congregations has, in co-operation with the Jewish Education Committee of New York City, initiated a series of experiments in some of the New York schools. It is the object of this experimentation to develop new units of instruction and activity in the school, to devise techniques for influencing the home Jewishly, and to stimulate children to attend at least one session in addition to Sunday in the Jewish religious school. New units of activity and new experiments are reported regularly in The Jewish Teacher.

The Commission on Jewish Education has likewise published materials for parents to help them educate their children who are not yet of school age. Since one of our fundamental aims is to bring the spirit of Judaism into the homes and to prepare their children for the Jewish religious school, we have issued such books as "Now We Begin" by Rabbi and Mrs. Rosenzweig, "Leading a Jewish Life in the Modern World" by Samuel H. Markowitz, and the beautiful Chanuko jingle book in four colors entitled "Happy Chanuko" by Jane Bearman.

The past twenty years have seen many changes in Jewish life. The Sunday School which, at one time, was conceived to be an institution of the Reform group alone, has become part and parcel of Conservative and in some communities even of Orthodox Jewish education. The Conservative group, through the United Synagogue, has likewise organized a Committee on Jewish Education and begun the publication of textbooks for Jewish religious schools. Examples of these are the Bible Stories by Sulamith Ish-Kishor, and the Hebrew Series by Simon Greenberg.

The writer regrets to report that in some communities which he recently surveyed outside of New York City, he found that only one-third of the children in Orthodox and Conservative congregations are getting an intensive Jewish education in Hebrew; while two-thirds of them are attending Sunday Schools of their own. From the point of view of the needs of Jewish education this is to be regretted, for all students of education agree that the one day a week school is not sufficiently intensive to give our children an adequate Jewish education. Thus while we regret the fact that during these years when we are striving to intensify Jewish education, the number of one day a week schools should have increased and the number of children receiving intensive Jewish education decreased, the basic fact must be recognized that

the Sunday School is here to stay. And if it is to stay, it is our duty to improve it and to use its facilities to the utmost and to enrich its curriculum so that the need for additional instruction during the week will be appreciated by both pupils and parents.

CHAPTER V

THE SUMMER CAMP

The Jewish Summer Camp

In recent years Jewish educational organizations and institutions have turned to the summer camp as a means of bringing Jewish educational influences to various groups of Jewish children. Summer camping for Jewish children under both communal and private auspices has been in vogue for a full generation--since the first and second World War. However, with but one or two very notable exceptions, such camping was motivated by objectives of health and recreation and coupled occasionally with some modicum of religious observance, but with very, very little--indeed if any, Jewish educative implication. Nevertheless, and thanks to the persistent and successful initiative of these exceptions, the profession of Jewish education became interested in camping as an agency for Jewish education. And now, after some years of more rapid development, the summer camp appears to have risen to the level of another approach, to the broad and difficult task of integrating our Jewish children happily and creatively into Jewish life within the American environment.

To gauge properly the significance of camping for Jewish education, it is well to consider some of the basic objectives of Jewish education in America. Among the aims that are central to most forms of Jewish group life in this country are: (1) To help the child understand and appreciate the meaning of his Jewishness both personally and socially; (2) to establish in him a sense of self-identification and association with the Jewish people; (3) to help the child to acquire knowledge and habits that will enable him to live and to behave Jewishly from childhood to maturity; (4) to instill in the child a readiness for personal participation in various forms of Jewish group activity. To be sure, there are other significant objectives, but they are chiefly by-paths and by-products of these; however, the four just specified suffice for our immediate purpose. In an article on PLANNING FOR JEWISH EDUCATION, Dr. I. S. Chipkin points to the need for certain natural organic elements in the educative process that might achieve these objectives, namely, time and environment. "Most of our present schooling is deprived, by external circumstances, of both these "natural elements in the educational process." (5, Page 50) Perforce, our schools fall back on the traditional factor, by itself alone perhaps the least significant, namely, knowledge.

The institution of camping not only permits, but

compels correction of the wrong emphasis. Camping does provide a continuous, integrated social environment as the natural milieu for the educational influence to be brought to bear upon the mind, character, and emotions of the pupil-camper. At camp, all activities can be integrated into a single harmonious process of normal living; at camp there is harmony, wholeness, and naturalness of environmental influences. It should then be recorded to the credit of enterprising Jewish educators that once their interest in camping was aroused it did not remain dormant, but became experimental and exploratory. Already we are able to refer significantly to several well defined types of educational approach through camping; (a) there is first the Jewish Cultural camp, (b) then there is the school camp; there are also (c) the Hebrew language camp, and (d) the Zionist Youth camp. Finally there is the Home Camp. In time, still other variants will surely develop. Let us then consider these several types of approach.

The Jewish Cultural Camp

"The first requisite for the conduct of any Jewish cultural camp is the presence of an environment of Jewish group living." (17, Page 20) This is accomplished in a variety of ways, some direct and definite, others subtle and incidental, but effective nevertheless. The very name of the camp has some form of Jewish significance--

historic or ideological, religious or cultural, associated with places of long ago or with America of the present. Similarly all other instances of 'naming' buildings and rooms, roads and paths, lake and field, stage and fireplace, camp paper and programs, groups and 'bunks', heads and leaders, all these designations of names are utilized to evolve an environment of Jewish connotations wherein the campers live, work and play.

Personnel: The personnel of a Jewish Cultural Camp must constitute a group of Jewish personalities. Ideally this should be the case with the entire camp staff and certainly with all such personnel as come in contact with the campers and influence their personality development. The right counselor approximates in his own person the type of young Jew into which the camp seeks to develop its campers.

Schedule: Another opportunity in organization is to be found in the camp schedule. This type of camp sets up Friday as clean-up day for camp and campers, Saturday as a day of physical relaxation and of spiritual experience and enjoyment; not of prohibitions as such but of especially suited activities. These aspects of organization, subtle though they appear to be, are nevertheless effective in establishing for the camper a Jewish environment that serves as a proper setting for his cultural experiences. Once established, these

and other environmental influences function steadily, and without effort by management, they penetrate deeply into the subconscious reactions of the young camper, leaving lasting impressions.

Religious Observance: The program of such camps contain definite religious elements. Its commissary is established according to Jewish dietary laws. This is basic and cannot be violated without serious upset of the entire project. It does not matter that some children may have other types of dietary experiences at home. Camp as a project of Jewish group living includes a 'kosher' cuisine. Another general experience is the element of a religious service each morning to begin the day's activity. The service varies in content and in length with the age and background of the camper groups. It can be a five minute service at the flag raising ceremony for the youngest group, or a longer service for campers who are accustomed to a full traditional service at home. Usually a ten to fifteen minute service is a suitable compromise for most campers. Sabbath services of course are included in the camp program, and are scheduled both for Friday evenings before dinner and for Saturday mornings after breakfast. These services are more elaborate, contentful and impressive. A concomitant of religious service is the reciting of a very brief grace before and after each daily meal, more

traditionally elaborate, with extensive singing of Zmirot on the Sabbath.

Aesthetic Expression: Further opportunity for educational objectives is found in the program of dramatics, music and art crafts, elements that are usual to any children's camp. In this type of camp, the dramatic plays deal with episodes of Jewish history or of Jewish values rather than with American Indian life or with 'Minstrel' shows. General themes, such as those, can well be left to the public school experiences of the Jewish child. At the Jewish cultural camp, he should be brought in contact to a maximum extent with Jewish experiences and Jewish values. Similarly in music, Jewish songs are added to the program of general songs; and the usual activity in arts and crafts tends to lend itself to the inclusion of Jewish motifs that are associated with Jewish content. All these elements serve as points of departure into much more extensive areas of Jewish culture. When a play is cast, a song taught, or an artistic motif developed, opportunity is had to explore and to teach some particular period in history, some value in religion, or some element in our culture that may be associated with it. This is cultural enrichment of the finest type, for it is the product of integrated association with the native interests and pleasures of the camper. Even nature study at camp offers an oppor-

tunity for comparative and contrasting association with the flora and fauna so often mentioned in the Bible, and more particularly with the semi-tropical plants and flowers of present day Palestine.

Happy Jewish Living: The Sabbath Day adds many more opportunities for the enrichment of the program. White clothing attire of campers from Friday sundown to Saturday evening, impressive Sabbath meals and aesthetic religious ceremonial rich with song at flower-bedecked white-clothed tables, Sabbath parties as a substitute for organized athletic games, leisurely informal play of a suitable nature, the day concluded with a beautiful Havdalah Sing and service at sunset--all these together constitute a recurrent weekly experience that never fails to leave its mark of influence on the Jewish group consciousness of any camper, however unaccustomed he may be to such practice, and however prosaic his Sabbath experience throughout the year.

These are the basic elements in the program of a Jewish cultural camp. Their detailed implementation provides also for knowledge and experiences that are corollary to the main elements suggested herein. At camp nothing is "extra"-curricular, everything is interrelated and forms a natural pattern of living sequence. A camper's Bar-Mitzvah or Bas-Mitzvah experience gains added significance when celebrated appropriately in a

completely children's environment. The Keren Ami project, now an accepted part of any good Jewish school system, functions most effectively at camp. A Palestine maccabead, dance fete, or arts and crafts bazaar, a water carnival with floats of Jewish historic interest--all these take their rightful and related place in the total span of camp life. Thus the usual pleasurable-life at camp, as expressed through entertainments and camp fires, song fests and parties, art and nature appreciation, physical activity and spiritual relaxation, become naturally associated with the Jewish cultural heritage, in an integrated environment of Jewish group living. All of it is achieved without extra effort on the part of the camper and without displacing any pleasurable activity in athletics or in aesthetic self-expression. This is truly an educational paradise for the camp director who is a skillful educator and who has succeeded in obtaining a qualified staff of counselors.

Study Circles: "Formal study is not an indispensable element in the program of a Jewish cultural camp." (19, Page 20) Another type of camp to be discussed later is organized more centrally around class study. However, the program of the cultural camp can also include periods for the study of Hebrew, Jewish History, liturgy and Bible, current Jewish life in America and abroad, and

achievement in Palestine. The frequency of these study periods and the intensity of study depend, of course, upon the age and the background of the campers. These considerations determine also to what extent the respective study groups shall include all campers or only some of them.

The Hebrew Language Camp

The Hebrew language camp is another adaptation and intensification of the general Jewish cultural camp programs. The motivation here is more towards the linguistic element in Jewish culture, without negating any of the educational activities and experiences in the program of the cultural camp. The objectives, content, and methods might well be exactly the same, only the language medium differs--in the one case it is English, in the other Hebrew. This type of camp might also be a school camp for it might well devote one or more hours daily to formal study of Jewish school subjects. In this sense Camp Yavneh is an example of the Hebraic school camp, while Massad is a Hebraic culture camp.

"Motivation for the Hebraic culture camp stems from the emphasis given by a sector of American Jewry to the importance of the Hebrew language in Jewish education and for Jewish cultural life." (20, Page 30) Parallel with the renaissance of Hebrew as a living language in Palestine, there has developed a determination in

American Jewish life, notably in Zionist circles, to regard the Hebrew language as a primary factor for the preservation of Hebraic culture for and among American Jewry. This conviction and determination give rise to many intensive efforts to spread the knowledge and the use of Hebrew, both by youth and by adults, as a medium of Hebraic culture. The projection of Hebrew language camping is in line with this approach. Of course, the study of Hebrew in a school camp might be regarded only as a technique or method for more rapid acquisition of the subject matter in the curriculum of the Jewish school. It is becoming apparent that both these motivations will encourage further the establishment of Hebrew speaking camps.

Zionist Youth Camp

Still another contribution to the Jewish education of youth through camping is being made by various Zionist organizations. Children's camps conducted by Young Judea, Habonim, and Hashomer organizations provide each summer for hundreds of children many significant elements that are a part also of the general broad and basic formulations of a Jewish education for the Jewish child. Motivated primarily by the desire to bring to this youth an understanding of the various concepts of Zionism and of the variety of achievements in Palestine, they actually provide a basic general Jewish education.

Jewish history and literature, institutions and customs, religion and liturgy, and the status of Jewry in the world today are all basic also to Zionist education. Hence, these camps are of necessity much broader in approach as Jewish educational agencies than their designation would suggest. Some of these camps are achieving educational standards that would do much credit to the average all-year round school. Especially significant is the work of some of these Zionist youth camps in the development of leadership--Zionist and general, among large sectors of youth in this country. An outstanding example of such leadership training is the Brandeis Camp Institute conducted by the American Zionist Youth Commission.

The Home Camp

To complete the picture of educational camping still further, mention must be made also of the home camp, and its opportunity to bring Jewish cultural influences to its campers. This form of camping has grown phenomenally in recent years. Generally it is an activity of the Jewish Community Center. Its differentiating characteristic is that it operates in the City and during the day only; the children live at home and come to the home camp for the day's program. This type of camp also has excellent opportunity to incorporate in its program many of the Jewish cultural elements that were described under

the program of the country camp. Home camps that are now associated with Jewish schools in Centers have incorporated in their program some of the activities of the school, and have thus helped to prevent the disorganization and deterioration that schools--especially very small congregational center schools, experience during the summer months. It is already apparent that as Jewish Centers and Jewish schools in a community become more integrated in aim and in process, so too will the large number of home camps become agencies for the preservation and extension of the year-round program of the Jewish school, whether it is conducted in the Center building or elsewhere.

The variety of approach to the problems of Jewish education through camping which has been presented indicates one very significant factor--among many others, to be sure--namely, that the Jewish community and the Jewish educator together are not satisfied with the present status of Jewish education. Together they are seeking new approaches, new values, and new methods. Among other new directions, such as the all-day school, they are exploring and exploiting also the new and the indigenous American institution--the children's summer camp.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

The purpose of the study was to analyze the various types of presentation that are made in teaching the Jewish child. It was found that there are four major areas of presentation. These areas comprise: (1) The Daily Afternoon Schools which seek to effectively utilize the time after Public School in its best way to teach the ideals of Judaism. (2) The All-Day School which seeks to monopolize the entire day of the Jewish child with the purpose of involving him completely in the broad fields of Judaism. (3) The Sunday Morning School which seeks to utilize the full morning of the Christian Sabbath for the inculcation of Jewish values. (4) The Summer Camp which seeks to solve the answer to the education of the Jewish child through his Public School Summer vacation period.

The study, with its attack of categorizing the various types of Jewish Education, did produce the following facts:

1. There are several different approaches to the use of time after Public School hours with the Talmud Torah or use of the Daily Afternoon

still being the largest in terms of practice.

2. The increased popularization of the Sunday School as the means of solving the problem of Jewish Education is being utilized.
3. Each element of Judaism, namely, Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative has a definite voice in shaping the various types of Jewish Education.
4. All types of Jewish Education are pointing to the Summer Camp as the future implementation of study and play within Judaism.
5. Hebrew Instruction is a common element to all types of Jewish Education.

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